



## Curiouser and Curiouser ...

Following the 'Personalisation' meeting with Mike Bibby we are left with more questions than answers. So sit down at the table, pour yourself a cup of tea and I'll tell you what we do know.

The minimum payment we'll get is nothing at all. Everyone will be assessed and if we don't score enough points we won't get a payment.

The maximum payment is as yet unknown. A figure of £5000 a year has been rumoured but not confirmed by the management.

We know the dayservice budget to be about £170,000 a year and there are about 800 people on CMHT's books. So if we split the budget between the 800 people we get an average of £212 a year (about 58p a day). When Direct Payments was first introduced a figure of £30 a day was mentioned (about £7800 a year).

Needless to say freedom of choice is measured in pounds and pence. Fifty eight pence does not buy you a drop in service, it buys you a can of pop.

Those who don't have care managers and aren't on the list will not automatically be eligible, there may be a bending of the rules as was the case at New Horizons and Sunrise in the past but as yet this is unconfirmed.

It occurs to me that if 34 very disabled people managed to get the £5000 this would completely use up all the money. The management would be left in a sticky situation and so would we. They would probably have to tighten up the assessment system to limit the number of people getting through.

We don't have to keep business



type records for personalisation, we can opt out of this and let the council do it.

At Sunrise about 5 members of staff run a service for about 30 of us. But, scaling it down, 3 of us can't hire half a staff member. Individual budgets lose value as they lack the savings from economy of scale of the current system.

Our personalisation broker will decide whether our spending is acceptable or not. They'll do this by consulting our care plan.

We don't know if there is a list of unacceptable spending items but Mike said we probably couldn't just spend it all on beer.

In theory it should be possible to mix and match, spend a day at a drop-in, then do something in the community another day (if you can afford it).

It is not my purpose here to shoot

down personalisation for the hell of it. My purpose is to point out the possible hazards of the scheme and save my tribe and myself from a world of hurt.

Personalisation is a complex system which, if badly managed, seems a recipe for stress and confusion. Most of us don't understand how it works or even why it's needed. If we liked the idea that much we'd have all volunteered for Direct Payments months ago. No-one from the management seems to fully understand it either. When you reinvent the system like this staff must be retrained, mistakes are made, there'll be huge amounts of extra paperwork and all this will cost the council money.

I wish Mike Bibby luck in his new job, he'll need luck and skill to make the system work. If he disagrees with what I've said here or has more information he has the right to reply.

# Giant Hamsters From Outer Space Invade London

Yes, giant hamsters from outer space are roaming the streets of London, and it seems they are giant alien hamsters of the worst kind... the invisible ones. Here is an artists impression of what they might look like if they weren't invisible. So I went on a trip to London and interviewed one of the hamsters who approached me near the houses of parliament and said his name was Herman.

D Welcome to our planet. Why have you and your people come to Earth?

H We got hungry, we have seen your television pictures, we know you have pop corn and Haagen Daas ice cream.

D Surely an advanced civilisation capable of space travel could make it's own pop corn.

H Yes. Unfortunately our spaceship was hit by an asteroid and our popcorn machine was irreparably damaged so we came to your planet.



D You appear to be carrying an invisible machine gun, do you intend to 'pop' the pop corn?

H Ah yes, the weapons... we wish to speak with your leader, the Gor-Don. They are for self defence only, we mean no harm to your planet.

D You have been watching our television pictures, do you think a hamster could run our country better?

H Yes, even a gerbil could.

D Have your people enjoyed their visit to our planet?

H Yes, the pop corn was satisfactory, the ice cream was good and the weather was not bad for the time of year. We will see the Gor-Don now and have 'a little chat with him'.

D Well he does need talking to and who better than a squad of giant hamsters from outer space to show him of the errors of his ways?

H So there is intelligent life on this planet... You would make a good hamster.

D Thanks Herman. When you do see the Gor-Don give him a big bite on the bum. It is a custom of our people.

## The Cause

It's now the 18th issue of Slough Mental Health News... we got banned after the first issue (a shaky start) but now we are starting to reach a mass audience. But what are we trying to do here? First it's about informing the tribe about what's going on. Sometimes you, our readers, will know more than we do. When this happens please tell us what you know and we'll pass on the message to the others. It's about fun and laughter and spreading a little happiness as you go by, as you may have noticed we're not serious all the time.

Ultimately we wish to unite the tribe, the mentalists, the 'people with mental health issues' and get a better deal for our people. But we're gonna need your help, any suggestions welcome.

## Thank You

Since this paper moved onto the internet I've noticed it moving up the list when I do a Google search for Slough mental. It's now No. 1 on the list so quite a few of you must be reading it.

I do thank thee noble readers, ye that hath righteously read my paper of news. Thou hast proved thyselfes worthy to write it.

Hail to thee and Hail to the King.



The Best Leader Britain Never Had

Got a story to tell? A poem? A Joke? A photo?

Is there something I've missed?

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